



Can psychiatric approaches help to address global warming?

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Abstract:

When I told my clergyman son that I may do a commentary on global warming, he asked why psychiatrists should be concerned. He rightly pointed out that the priority of physicians is their patients' health. Then I told him that our AMA ethical principles also cite responsibility to public health. Since global warming endangers health and seems mainly caused by human behavior, our call to duty is clear. However, as has been previously pointed out, physicians have been conspicuously quiet. Psychiatrists maybe more so. Why might that be? Our brains are hardwired to respond to immediate dangers, not to unique threats likely after our deaths. This leads to being blasé. Therefore, instead of using psychiatric insight and techniques to reduce excessive anxiety, shame, and guilt for global warming these emotions will need to be increased in the unconcerned. This kind of 'help' runs counter to our usual goal of not making people feel worse! But remember that at times we indeed try to make our patients more anxious or guilty when we want them to be more compliant. We just need to do this more strategically.

Source: <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/558522>

Resource Description

Communication: ☒

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change;
 surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience: ☒

audience to whom the resource is directed

Health Professional

Exposure : ☒

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Unspecified Exposure

Geographic Feature: ☒

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Global or Unspecified

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Mental Health/Stress

Mental Health Effect/Stress: Stress Disorder

Intervention:

strategy to prepare for or reduce the impact of climate change on health

A focus of content

Medical Community Engagement:

resource focus on how the medical community discusses or acts to address health impacts of climate change

A focus of content

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation, Mitigation

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Policy/Opinion

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified